

Stephen Beagent Associates' Newsletter

Finance and Accountancy Recruitment Specialists

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'The latest report on jobs provides firm evidence of the absence of a post-Iraq bounce in the labour market. Permanent staff placements and temporary staff billings in fact fell at increased rates. The renewed weakness of the labour market reflected widespread business uncertainty for employers!' These are the comments of Brett Walsh, Head of Human Capital at Deloitte and Touche in his latest report findings.

Recruitment Consultancies generally link the sharper drop in staff placement to an increased number of clients placing recruitment activity on hold whilst business conditions remain uncertain. However, a downturn in the economy could be the best time to find new talent, as there is usually a surplus of skilled people on the market, and the hiring decisions that you make now will determine how well you do in the post-economic turnaround.

Now is the best time to effectively train and acclimatize new people. Companies will have more time for a thorough interviewing process, which means no rash hiring decisions. Due to the great talent pool you have the opportunity to replace mediocrity with excellence and as a result of the base salary being less than in an upturn economy, placement fees are lower.

You also have the time to assess which resources (search firms, job boards, website etc) are bringing you the people your company requires.

'Was my degree really worth the investment?'

With today's graduates facing an ever-increasing burden of debt, coupled with a striking pessimism about the state of the current employment market, many are now posing the question '*Was my degree really worth the investment?*'

The Guardian's 'Grad Facts', released at the end of 2002, estimates that student debt upon graduation is currently reaching as much as £12,000. Unsurprisingly, this is highlighted as a major concern amongst graduates, with some 57% of the 2000 questioned disagreeing with the statement 'I don't mind being in debt'. To compound these feelings of unease, a sizeable proportion believe that there are fewer opportunities open to them than ever before, and are beginning to look at the graduate recruitment market as a ruthless commercial business in which they have been 'consumers' of the expensive higher education they (or their parents!) have paid for.

These graduates, labelled as members of 'Generation Y' by Kendall Tarrant Worldwide in their article 'The Young Ones', were found to be motivated in a strikingly different manner from their predecessors, and as such were more concerned with issues of personal growth than the constraints of traditional job titles and hierarchies. In addition to this, they demand early responsibility, a greater appreciation of the importance of a work/life balance, and more opportunities for progression. Moreover, according to the research, the concept of a career for life is

also a thing of the past, with only 15% expecting to stay in their first job for more than 3 years.

This shift in attitudes demands that employers adapt their HR policies in order to attract and retain the best graduate talent, concentrating upon developing a more flexible recruitment strategy which focuses upon the needs and strengths of the individual, rather than a traditional 'one size fits all' approach. Indeed, the author of a new report from the Institute for Employment Studies has echoed these sentiments, stating on the basis of her research that 'Employers need to show graduates that the opportunities they want are available internally and that they don't need to leave in order to get where they want to go.'

Thus aware that they are commodities in a highly competitive business, today's graduates are far more conscious of the skill sets and competency agendas required by the major recruiters. They know that they must market themselves as effectively as possible in order to break into the employment scene and make good their heavy financial investment, and are more than prepared to do this in order to succeed. The challenge for employers is now to match these changing attitudes, as recruitment of the best people, be they graduates or not, will always be the driving force behind every truly successful company.

¹ Born post 1978

Age Discrimination in the Work Place

Ageism is an accepted fact in many workplaces and is now the most common form of discrimination.

Proposals published by the government to outlaw age discrimination will have a big impact on people's working lives, pensions, redundancy and unfair dismissal rights. The package, which is to come into effect by the end of 2006, will give older workers new rights in an attempt to lengthen working lives.



It aims to reduce the flood of people who have lost their jobs in their 50s and then found it hard to find work. It could also mean that final salary pension schemes are extended so that full benefits are payable at the age of 70.

Most men can now draw a full pension from the age of 65 and most women from 60.

The legislation's aim is to ensure that selection, recruitment, promotion and training decisions are made on the basis of merit and competence not age.

Advertisements seeking 'young and energetic' workers or 'mature and experienced' ones would be outlawed, although employers would be able to place advertisements in publications aimed at particular age groups.

Employers would be able to retain age-related practices if they could justify them, for example on health, safety and welfare grounds, to allow employment planning, so that a company did not face a large number of people retiring at the same time, or for specific training requirements. Schemes which encouraged and rewarded loyalty – extra holiday for length of service, would be permitted.

The Government also proposes changes to the statutory redundancy scheme so that all workers get only 1 weeks pay for each year of service, instead of 1½ weeks for employees aged between 41 and 65. However, unlike the present situation, service before the age of 18 would be counted.

Employees are discriminated against more on the basis of their age than on their sex.

Research found that 1 in 5 workers had experienced discrimination at work, with 38% citing ageism as the cause.

Age discrimination during recruitment was more common in men, with 45% citing it compared with just 27% of women.

At the same time Britain's pension crisis could see us working into our old age. Will we become a nation of Grandparents working until we drop?

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Work-Life Balance: Fact or Fiction?

Striking a work-life balance benefits organisations, individuals and the UK as a whole. If individuals have time sovereignty (the degree of control a person has over their tasks, which in turn has an impact on their effectiveness at work), they enjoy a better quality of life. Organisations benefit through increased productivity, lower overheads and satisfied customers, as well as lower rates of absenteeism and improved recruitment and retention of staff.

FACT:

75% of UK employees currently work overtime, and of these, only 36% are rewarded with extra pay or time off in lieu

72% of the most highly stressed workers do not have access to formal flexible working practices

The largest proportion of very stressed workers (19%) are in their mid to late thirties

19% of men have visited the doctor because of stress, rising to 23% of men over 40

48% of employees surveyed say that their employer will only step in to redress a work-life problem when a crisis looms

The DTI has published a work-life balance survey which reveals that employees in the UK work longer hours than the majority of their European counterparts, although output per UK worker is nearly half that of US employees and significantly lower than that of Germany and France, it is claimed. However, the CBI believes that absentee levels are the main reasons behind the low output.

FACT:

2.7 million people are on long-term sick leave costing employers £11bn

British industry loses £370m every year to stress-related sick leave

There is increased legislation to extend the rights of employees in a wide range of circumstances. These rights will increase parents' opportunities to work flexibly, and the DTI is also running a campaign to encourage employers to introduce ways of working which improve the work-life balance of their employees and benefit their business.

It is well known that productivity improves when a workforce feels that it is being rewarded appropriately and not overworked.

Policies most commonly used by employers to improve working conditions include:

Flexitime

Working from home

Parental/Paternity Leave

25% of workers would like to get a better balance but think that their career would suffer

40% of unstressed workers play regular sport compared with 25% of those with high stress levels

The largest growth in job market participation between 1990 and 2000 occurred among mothers with young children

The number of women working more than 60 hours per week has more than doubled from 6% in 2000 to about 13% today

The incidence of stress has been shown to increase with work intensification

FACT:

A poll of 4000 jobs seekers revealed that 33% would prefer to work flexible hours rather than receive an extra £1000 p.a.

46% chose flexible working as the benefit they would most look for in their next job

The way in which people work is often as important as what they do. Having staff who are happy, motivated and energetic is as important as having those with the right skills.

With thanks to The Work Foundation and The Scotsman.

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Age Discrimination in the Work Place continued from page 1.

Britain's pension crisis is getting worse. An estimated 13 million people are not saving enough for their old age and many of them face having to work beyond their predicted retirement age.

Currently just over 6 million people aged between 50 and state pension age are in employment – an employment rate of 69 per cent. The employment rate for men aged 50–59 is 71% and for women aged 50–59 is 66%. Since 1997 the employment rate of older people has risen faster than that of the working age population as a whole. The average length of time in current employment is higher for older workers (13 years compared with 7 years for those aged 25–49).

There are 19 million people aged 50 and over in the UK (40% of the adult population). The proportion of older people in the population is growing, partly because the post-war baby boom generation is now reaching and passing 50 years of age.

When the first pension age was set a hundred years ago, most people died 25 years before they reached it. Today they live well beyond it.

In October 2000, the Government supported the European Directive on Equal Treatment and committed to implementing age legislation by 2006. A six year implementation period was agreed. This allows the Government time to prepare clear, workable and beneficial age legislation, in consultation with individuals, employers and expert groups.

Evidence is beginning to show that an age diverse workforce is more productive and efficient, with age positive employers enjoying lower staff turnover rates, lower absenteeism and workers with higher levels of motivation and efficiency.

On a lighter note...

These are extracts from real resumes and cover letters printed in the July 21 1997 issue of Fortune Magazine.

I demand a salary commiserate with my extensive experience
I have lurnt Word Perfect 6.0 computer and spreadsheet programs
Received a plague for Salesperson of the Year
Reason for leaving last job: Maturity leave
Wholly responsible for two (2) failed financial institutions
Failed bar exam with relatively high grades
It's best for employers that I not work with people
Let's meet so you can 'ooh' and 'aah' over my experience
You will want me to meet the Head Honcho in no time
Am a perfectionist and rarely if ever forget detail
I was working for my mum until she decided to move
Marital Status: Single. Unmarried. Unengaged. Uninvolved.
No commitments.
I have an excellent track record, although I am not a horse
I am loyal to my employer at all cost, please feel free to respond to my resume on my office voicemail
I have become completely paranoid, trusting no one and absolutely nothing
I procrastinate, especially when the task is unpleasant

Oxford Office:	High Wycombe Office:	Reading Office:
Guydens Farm Business Park, Oxford Road, Oxford, Oxon OX44 9AZ Tel: 01865 361180 Fax: 01865 361143	Chancery Court, Lincolns Inn, Lincoln Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3RE Tel: 01494 429340 Fax: 01494 429341	200 Brook Drive, Green Park, Reading, Berks RG2 6UB Tel: 0118 949 7092 Fax: 0118 949 7001

Web: www.stephenbeagent.co.uk
Email: info@stephenbeagent.co.uk